Dinner à la Equus

Continued

January, includes ribs cooked in a Philippine style.

The most popular dish on the menu is chicken breast stuffed with artichokes, Smithfield ham, mushrooms and cheese. But a majority of customers (usually regulars) order tasting menus — four or five courses, picked by the chef, that include foods not on the menu. Successes from these "tastings" become daily specials and, Corbett hopes, will eventually become menu items.

Slowly, very slowly, he hopes to build a repertoire that, in addition to traditional items, includes exotic fruits, exciting combinations and ethnic ingredients.

In the meantime, he seems to be having a good time learning about wines and "more about dishwashing equipment than I ever wanted to know." As success increases, he keeps branching out, expanding the menu and marketing more aggressively (although the restaurant doesn't advertise). But the bottom line is cooking, and Corbett seems happy with it after a year of being in business.

"There's nothing more satisfying than watching those first five or 10 meals go out absolutely perfect," he says. "I love this business."

Sweet-pepper soup with feta cheese

1 medium onion
1 large shallot
1 red bell pepper
1 green bell pepper
3 tablespoons butter
4 ounces dry white wine
7½ cups chicken stock (see recipe)
2 teaspoons cornstarch
3 ounces feta cheese

Peel and chop onion and shallot. Core and chop peppers into 1-inch pieces.

Melt butter in 4-quart saucepan and add vegetables. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until onion is transparent and peppers are soft. Add white wine and boil rapidly until the wine has nearly disappeared. Add chicken stock and simmer, uncovered, for about 1 hour. Do not replace any liquid. Strain the soup — stock should measure 6 cups. Purée the vegetables in a blender. Combine ½ cup liquid with 2 teaspoons cornstarch. Add vegetables and cornstarch mixture to soup and bring to a boil. Ladle into bowls and serve topped with grated feta cheese. Serves six.

Stock: 2 pounds of chicken backs and wings, 1 onion, 1 celery stalk, 1 carrot. Place chicken in large pot with vegetables and 2½ to 3 quarts cold water. Add a little thyme and/or basil, if desired. Add parsley in moderation — a sprig or two at most. Too much parsley will turn this light stock green. Bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat and simmer at least 2 hours. Strain and discard all solids. Simmer strained chicken stock, uncovered, until it measures 7½ cups.

Veal Adrienne

16 1½-ounce veal scallopini
4½ ounces Genoa salami
4½ ounces havarti cheese
4½ ounces toasted, salted almonds (about 1¼ cups)
2 shallots
½ cup butter
2 tablespoons port, approximately
2 cups quick brown sauce (see recipe)

Veal should be pounded thin. Grind salami, cheese and almonds in a food processor or meat grinder. Form into 1½-ounce balls (about the size of a walnut). Place these balls a little off-center in the veal and fold the veal over to enclose filling, pressing with fingers to seal (the seal will come undone as the meat cooks). Veal may be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated.

Peel and chop shallots. Melt ¼ cup butter in a large skillet and add shallots. Cook over medium-high heat until translucent. Add port and flame until the alcohol burns off and the flame dies. (If you have a gas stove, just tip the skillet away from you and the port should light. Or light it with a match.) Add brown sauce and bring to a boil, then turn heat very low.

Melt ¼ cup butter in a large skillet. Add stuffed veal and brown quickly over high heat — this should take less than 1½ minutes. Place on hot platter and keep warm in a 250-degree oven until ready to serve.

Serve with sauce, wild rice and sautéed squash. Serves four.

Note: The veal should be room temperature before you cook it, otherwise the cheese will not melt in the brief cooking time. If you transfer it directly from refrigerator to skillet; a brief warming period in the oven is absolutely required.

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In our busy society, "quick" might refer to a pizza delivered in less than 20 minutes. A meat sauce made by chopping vegetables and herbs and letting them simmer a half-hour probably wouldn't be considered of in the same category.

But "quick" here is a relative term. This is a short-cut recipe for a delicious meat sauce — a fancy gravy, really. The traditional sauce would require a veal stock made from cracked veal bones that had simmered at least 2 hours.

Quick brown sauce

2 cups canned beef bouillon
3 tablespoons minced carrots
3 tablespoons minced onions
1 tablespoon minced celery
½ cup dry red or white wine
2 parsley sprigs
A bit of bay leaf
A pinch of thyme
1 tablespoon tomato paste
4 peppercorns
1 tablespoon cornstarch

Combine all ingredients except cornstarch and simmer 30 minutes. Strain to remove all solid bits of vegetables.

Combine cornstarch with 2 tablespoons cold water, then add 2 tablespoons hot stock. Use a wire whisk to beat cornstarch into strained broth and simmer 5 minutes.

Chocolate Grand Marnier torte with crème anglaise

Torte:

9 ounces semi-sweet chocolate
1¾ cups sliced almonds
¼ cup bread crumbs (roughly ½ slice bread)
9 eggs
1¼ sticks butter
Grated rind of 1 lemon
Grated rind of ½ orange
¼ cup Grand Marnier
Strawberries for garnish, if desired

Glaze:

2 ounces semi-sweet chocolate
¼ cup heavy whipping cream

Crème anglaise:

1 cup milk
1 cup heavy cream
6 egg yolks
½ teaspoon vanilla
¼ cup sugar

To make the torte: Melt chocolate in a double boiler over hot but not boiling water. Set aside to cool. Combine almonds and bread crumbs in a food processor and pulse several times to grind. Set aside. Place eggs in food processor, add butter, rinds and Grand Marnier and blend well. Transfer to mixing bowl and stir in almonds, then chocolate. Pour into a greased and floured 8- or 9-inch springform pan and bake at 375 degrees for 40 minutes. Cool completely before removing from pan.

To make the glaze: Melt chocolate with cream over hot water. Stir to combine completely. While the glaze is still warm, spread it on the cake.

To make crème anglaise: Heat milk and heavy cream in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. The milk should be very hot but not boiling. Meanwhile, beat egg yolks with sugar until they are light and fluffy. Beat in vanilla. Drizzle in hot milk, beating well. Place all ingredients in saucepan and cook over low heat until the mixture thickens. Do not bring near a boil, or the sauce will curdle.

Spoon crème anglaise onto plates and top with a wedge of torte. Garnish with strawberries, if desired. □

In Style

Use decorative accessories to turn your bathroom into a dear john

By Yvonne Eaton

Gary S. Chapm

The vase is Swedish crystal; the Lalique box has trim of brass, whi also is found on the towel rack a the soap-dish stand; the old jars have tortoise-shell tops. The mir and comb and the lip and cosme brushes are in sterling silver.

Many of today's bathrooms and dressing rooms rival any room in the house for elegance. With their marble (fake and real), designer tiles, wallpapers and fabrics, bathrooms have become areas in which to express your individuality.

Their large vanity tops can become a fountain of wealth for displaying more than necessities in accessories. You may have yearned for an antique vanity or a new silver set but can't forsake your hot comb and curling iron entirely for these pieces of romance. Why not let a vanity set be a start for mirroring elegance in a bathroom? (Put those high-tech hairstyling items in a drawer.) Then add glass or crystal jars and other containers — some with silver or tortoise shell tops — to hold everything from creams and bath salts to cotton balls. There also are silver cosmetic sets for eyes and lips.

Nothing can sweeten up a room the way a perfume-bottle collection can. If you don't have perfumes for the bottles, there's nothing wrong with filling them with a little tea water for appearance.

Crystal ring holders and containers of scented candles also are decorative and practical. Brass and gold-plated accessories provide a Midas touch in elegance. Brass items range from shiny bright to antique finishes. Take your choice of soap dishes, tissue holders, wastebaskets, towel holders, etc.

Don't be afraid to mix gold or brass with silver; it can be done. Some bathroom accessories combine the two to help you coordinate the colors. When it's time to change your color scheme, metal pieces are neutral, so they won't have to go down the drain.

If brass or silver is a bit dressy for your taste, there are endless alternatives. Porcelains are dressier than the plastics. Plastics and acrylics lend contemporary decor. Wickers, in colors and natural tones, can have a casual, dressy or in-between look.

Accessories don't have to scream bath or dressing room. Pretty porcelain boxes, plants, vases, picture frames and clocks can all do decorative duty in the bathroom.

Only your imagination limits what goes into this area of the house.

For more information about the items pictured, call Readers' Service, 582-4545. □